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# Wisconsin Forestry Notes

July 2003

Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry

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*When gypsy moths have an "outbreak," the caterpillars defoliate trees (eat all the leaves). Most trees can grow a replacement set of leaves ("refoliate") by late July, and the forest will be green again. However, this is very stressful for a tree, and tree growth slows for several years. In this weakened state, the tree can be attacked by other forest insects and diseases. Trees weakened by defoliation will also stop making nuts, sometimes for years, and wildlife lose out on a food source. While the trees are bare, predators can easily find nests and songbirds may lose their young. Lack of shade from the tree makes water temperatures warmer, which lowers the amount of oxygen in the water for aquatic plants and animals. Without the dense canopy of leaves as a buffer, rainwater is more likely to erode the forest soil and lower water quality in streams. Fish and other aquatic animals can be stressed during this period before trees "releaf." These are all signs that the gypsy moth has struck an area.*

(from DNR's "Environmental Education for Kids" Website)

## Update on gypsy moth defoliation

The defoliation and nuisance caused by gypsy moths are expected to peak in the first two weeks of July. Here is an update regarding the areas most affected by this pest.

Populations of gypsy moth continue to increase and spread in the parts of the state where they were observed last summer in Northeast, Southeast and Central Wisconsin. Reports from locations sprayed as part of the DNR gypsy moth suppression program, however, indicate that nearly all sites treated have significant reductions in the gypsy moth population and good protection of the trees.

In Southeast Wisconsin, gypsy moth outbreaks are still scattered though the pest is established throughout the area. Caterpillars are becoming a nuisance in many communities in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee Counties and in the southern part of Washington County. Defoliation is starting to become noticeable in some of these areas and will increase until caterpillars stop feeding in mid-July to pupate. The Twin Lakes area of Kenosha County is already experiencing defoliation that is heavy on some properties. The most extensive and heaviest defoliation in Southeast Wisconsin is at Holy Hill in Washington County.

In Northeast Wisconsin, patches of complete defoliation have already developed in Marinette County and in the Berry Lake area of Oconto County. These areas are particularly favorable for gypsy moth, and egg mass densities in these areas were among the highest in the state so early development of defoliation is to be expected. These patches of complete defoliation will spread and new patches will develop in both Marinette and Oconto Counties until caterpillars pupate in mid-July. In Green Bay and Oskosh, the population of caterpillars is high enough to cause numerous complaints but no defoliation has developed in either area yet.

Last summer, defoliation was reported for the first time in the central counties of Waupaca, Portage and Waushara. This year there have been many more calls from these counties and we expect to find a significant expansion of the area affected by defoliation when these counties are surveyed in mid-July.

For more information, contact [Andrea Diss](mailto:Andrea.Diss@dnr.state.wi.us) at (608) 264-9247 or to see where the gypsy moth suppression spraying occurred this year, visit the DNR Website at: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/Fh/gm/index.htm>

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